
Blighted Property Review Committee

Regular Meeting Tuesday, February 05, 2008

The regular meeting of the Blighted Property Review Committee was held on the above date for the transaction of general business.

ATTENDANCE

W. Bealer
L. Olsen, Chair
M. Candelario
M. Wolfe

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

C. Kanezo
J. Khokhar
S. Franco
M. Mayfield

ABSENT

None

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Olsen called the meeting to order at 6:10p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Mr. Bealer noted several minor errors and stressed his corrections were grammatical and not related to content. Mr. Bealer offered to submit his corrections, in writing, to Mr. Kanezo. The minutes, as corrected, and agenda were approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public present.

REVIEW OF GREAT VALLEY ASSOCIATES REPORT

Mr. Olsen noted the scope of the two reports -- Great Valley Associates and Housing Advocates for Reading -- was immense. Mr. Olsen requested the representatives of the Codes Department provide their initial impressions.

Mr. Franco discussed the various aspects of each report; he indicated the Great Valley Associates report was still waiting on the completion of various GIS overlays. The overlays would show the location of each property identified by the report. Mr. Franco stated the GIS overlays would present a clear picture of the overall blighted property situation facing the City.

Mr. Olsen expressed concern over the large number of properties that present a clear danger to the health and well being of the City. Mr. Olsen felt it should be the responsibility of the committee to proactively address properties requiring emergency demolition.

Mr. Franco noted resources could be concentrated to address specific areas of concern; however, the chief difficulty remains determining an overall strategy to deal with such properties. Mr. Khokhar reminded the committee of the rate at which available resources would be exhausted. Mr. Khokhar noted other resources could be used to address properties in need of emergency demolition.

Mr. Olsen suggested dividing prospective targets identified by the Great Valley Report into two groups: group one would include properties preventing a danger to the health and welfare of the community; group two would include properties that should be demolished for economic development purposes. Mr. Khokhar recommended the committee meet with officials responsible for economic development efforts, in order to better understand plans and priorities.

Mr. Bealer thought such a meeting would be useful, provided the relevant organizations were invited. Mr. Bealer noted the large number of projects regularly brought before the Planning Commission and the importance of addressing these projects in the context of an overall strategy.

Rev. Wolfe cautioned against proceeding in a haphazard manner; she felt resources should be applied where the greatest community benefit could be realized.

Mr. Bealer recommended the committee consider the adoption of a comprehensive approach; one which would support ongoing redevelopment areas, Downtown Improvement District initiatives and private economic development efforts.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Bealer presented useful background information on the steps associated with creating a redevelopment zone and provided each member of the committee with a flow chart detailing the process.

Mr. Olsen commented on the importance of adhering to process and thanked Mr. Bealer for taking the time to research such an important issue.

Mr. Candelario suggested that as the committee works to

STAFF REPORT

Mr. Kanezo reported that he met with John Kramer, of the Center for Community Leadership, and developed a plan for coordinating a meeting of regional Blighted Property Review Committees. Mr. Kanezo stated the arrangements would be refined based on responses received from invited committees. Three possible options have been discussed:

1. Members of the Reading Committee could travel and meet with other committees at a location convenient to all parties;
2. Other committees would be invited to Reading;
3. A video conference could be convened, provided each committee had access to the necessary technology.

Mr. Kanezo reminded the committee that the following municipalities were identified as possessing functioning Blighted Property Review Committees: Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, York, Lancaster, Harrisburg, Wilkes-Barre and Scranton.

Mr. Olsen opened the floor for additional comment, seeing that there was no further discussion he entertained a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Mr. Candelario to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Christopher G. Kanezo, Deputy City Clerk